

LABOR FEDERATION WILL AID CLERKS

Gompers and Associates to Do
All They Can to Defeat Bor-
land Rider.

The American Federation of Labor has taken up the fight of the Government clerk in Washington against the eight-hour day. Through the executive council, now in session in this city, it has forwarded a protest to Speaker Clark, Congressman Borland, and the House Committee on Appropriations.

The enforcement of an eight-hour day for Government clerks, the labor leaders state in their letter, is opposed to good policy, and flies in the face of all industrial experience.

The lengthening of the hours of toll brings about no saving, they state. On the contrary, decreasing the hours of work to a normal workday tends toward greater efficiency, greater accuracy of service and a longer amount of work accomplished in a given time.

Even if there were no foundation for the argument that a longer work day is uneconomical, they declare, there is something of greater value to the nation than the saving of a small amount of public money.

The state and all the agencies of organized society have as their ultimate purpose the promotion of the health, the comfort, the happiness and the development of citizens. These are the principles of human welfare, therefore, at stake, which are far more important, the labor leaders say, than principles of economy.

Most of the session of the executive council of the American Federation of Labor yesterday afternoon and last night was occupied in the consideration of the Borland amendment.

President Gompers brought the matter to the attention of his associates, and after an extended conference was authorized to draw up a letter of protest to Speaker Clark, Congressman Borland, and the members of the Committee on Appropriations of the House, which would set forth labor's sentiments on the matter.

Authorized To Fight Measure.

Further than this, President Gompers and the other officers of the federation were authorized to do everything in their power to defeat the Borland amendment. The letter of protest follows:

"Appropos of the proposition coming before the House of Representatives, an amendment to H. R. 1287, which in effect will increase the hours of service of Government clerks and other employees in the executive departments and of the District of Columbia, the executive council of the American Federation of Labor, now in session at its headquarters in Washington, D. C., respectfully call your attention to the fact that it is now generally recognized that shortening hours of work is a fundamental principle of human welfare.

"It is fundamental because of the effect upon workers in all the various relations of life. These facts make it doubly deplorable that the United States Government should be asked to consider a proposition to increase the number of hours that its employees shall work daily, and it is exceedingly regrettable that the demand for a longer workday for Government employees should be made under a pretense of economy.

No Saving In Long Hours.

"All industrial experience goes to prove that there is no saving in lengthening hours of toll. On the contrary, decreasing the hours of work to a normal workday always tends toward greater efficiency, greater accuracy of service, and a larger amount of work accomplished in a given time. These workers who come to the office or places of work each morning refreshed and with quickened physical strength and mental interests and power are of greater value in their respective places of service than clerks who, because they have worked longer, have found it necessary to disarrange, to limit, or to forego entirely other duties and activities of life.

"But even though there were foundation for the argument that a longer workday would be more economical, there is something of greater value to the nation than saving public money. The state and all of the agencies of organized society have as their ultimate purpose the promotion of the health, comfort, happiness, and development of citizens. Human lives and human welfare must not be balanced against public money with the idea that the nation can afford to save dollars at the expense of human welfare.

"There are principles of human welfare that are of infinitely more importance to the nation than are any principles of economy. America represents an ideal which places humanity paramount above all else. It comes, therefore, with a shock to those who have an understanding of the principles of national welfare and the principles of humanity that a proposition should be made to Congress to lengthen hours of labor for its employees in order that a sum of money may be saved the Government.

"The cumulative effect of longer hours of work will have an indelible influence upon the lives of those citizens who are the employees of the Government in the National Capital. The effects will be evident, not only physically, but mentally, socially, and in all of the various phases of the everyday life.

"If America is to be true to her ideals, she must observe the highest concepts of the relations that ought to exist between those who employ and those who render service, and the best expression of those concepts ought to be found in the conditions afforded Government employees in the Nation's Capital."

Change Would Not Affect Strayer's Business College

An hour a day more for the Government clerks will not seriously affect Strayer's Business College, in the opinion of P. J. Harman, principal of the school. He said:

"I don't think the eight-hour law for clerks would have any direct effect at all upon our school. The fact of having to work an extra hour during the day would not keep any pupil who is really ambitious from keeping up his night school work."

"Of course, I can see how the schools that have their classes in the late afternoon will be adversely affected by the law. Most of the stores regulate their hours according to the present eight-hour law, and it would not make much difference to them."

G. V. Buck Opposed to Eight Hours for Clerks

G. V. Buck, of Buck's studio, is opposed to increased hours for the clerks. He said:

"I think it would be best to let the clerks' hours stand just as they are at present. A little more time in the morning or evening wouldn't amount to much saving for the Government, anyhow."

"If they would make up for the extra hour by giving the clerks their Saturday half-holiday the year round, I believe, though, most of the clerks themselves would favor that."

"That added hour would work special hardships on the Government employees who live in the suburbs, who have to get up pretty early to get to work in time now."

Post Sees Little In Borland Rider

Assistant Secretary of Labor Post can see but little, if any advantage to the Government through the Borland proposal for an additional hour's work from Government employees in Washington.

"The benefits of such legislation," he said today, "depend entirely upon the class of work being performed by the various branches of service affected. Where employees are engaged on tasks that require close mental or physical application or concentration, the Government will derive no practical and no economic benefit from an hour's increase in the workday."

"On other classes of work, such as that of a watchman, to cite the other extreme, it requires another hour of duty would mean another hour of service, or work that the Government would see fit to do, but not in many of the Government tasks."

"Take, for example, a linotype operator. He must be sedately and diligently busy on concentrated work every hour his machine is working. By increasing his time an hour, you would not get that much more work accomplished from him. He could not maintain the concentration and speed for a longer day than he could for the short day."

"At present," Mr. Post continued, "the privileges enjoyed in the Government service attract many highly efficient and capable workers, who are attracted because they can devote some of their hours to other pursuits. If the privilege of short hours were taken away, the Government would not get these men, because they would not enter the Government service, if denied the opportunity of other pursuits in connection with their Government work."

"It must be admitted that short hours and other privileges tend to attract some men who are loafers and who may render less than seven hours real work, but lengthening the hours for all workers would not change their characteristics. They would still be loafers and would give no more actual service in the longer day."

"For clerical work, I believe one can accomplish the same efficient results in a six hour as an eight hour day."

This is the opinion of William F. Gude, former president of the Chamber of Commerce and an officer in many civil organizations and financial institutions of the District.

"I haven't had time to examine the bill or the merits of the Borland proposition," Mr. Gude said today. "But I don't see how it could increase the efficiency of the Government service and I am pretty well convinced that whatever its possibilities might be an eight hour day for the clerks in the Government departments would not increase their efficiency."

"In purely clerical work it has been my experience that as much can be efficiently accomplished in a six hour day as in an eight hour day. We have an efficient Government service—one that compares with the service of private institutions and corporations most favorably. I believe in building up its efficiency but I do not see how an increase in the number of working hours is going to do it."

Harry E. Claffin, optician, at 407 F street, thinks longer hours for the clerks would retard the early closing efforts by Washington merchants. He said:

"I am opposed to lengthening the clerks' hours because it would hinder us in our efforts to comply with the spirit of the eight-hour law for store clerks."

"We believe in early closing, but we would have to keep open later if our customers don't get away from the office in time to find the stores open."

Eight-Hour Day Not Aid to Efficiency

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Says 8-Hour Bill Would Prevent Early Closing

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